

berachtigheyt van 's menschen leven." For a discussion of emblematic literature of ice scenes see Van Straaten 1977, 43–48.

6. For other paintings in which figure groups found in the Washington painting occur, see Welcker 1933/1979, (1979) plates xxii, xxv.

7. The relationship between these two paintings was thoughtfully analyzed in 1986 by Kathleen Pedersen in a graduate seminar paper at the University of Maryland (in NGA curatorial files).

8. Keys in Amsterdam 1982a, 55, note 25.

9. I owe these observations to Kathleen Pedersen (see note 7 above). The extended bottom edge of the pole (with fish attached), now worn away, can be faintly observed in the x-radiograph and in the surface of the paint itself when examined with a binocular microscope. The skate/shoe,

turned into a bird, is apparent as overpaint when it is examined with a binocular microscope.

10. For an excellent analysis of the Carter painting see Los Angeles 1981, 3–7.

11. See note 1.

12. See Amsterdam 1982a, 28.

References

- 1934 "Collectie der Firma Katz."
1934 Niehaus.
1968 NGA: 2, no. 2315, repro.
1975 NGA: 14–15, no. 2315, repro.
1933/1979 Welcker: 216, no. S 73.3.
1982 Keys in Amsterdam 1982a: 37–55, note 25.
1985 NGA: 33, repro.
1986 Sutton: 305, repro.

Ludolf Backhuysen

1631–1708

LUDOLF BACKHUYSEN, whose name appears in the literature in a number of different forms (e.g. Bakhuisen, Backhuisen, Bakhuizen), was born in the German town of Emden on 18 December 1631. He was the son of a scribe, Gerhard Backhaus, and initially followed in his father's footsteps, working as a clerk in the government offices at Emden. After the family moved to Amsterdam in 1649, he held a similar post with the firm of the wealthy merchant Guilielmo Bartolotti van den Heuvel, a fellow native of Emden.

In 1656, while still apparently working for Bartolotti, Backhuysen is recorded as a member of *Kallographie*, a society of those proficient in beautiful penmanship. From 1650 onward he was also working as a draftsman, producing "pen-paintings" and *grisailles*. In documents of 1657 and 1660 he is still referred to as a draftsman, and although his earliest dated oil painting was executed in 1658, he did not join the painters' guild until February 1663. By this time any formal training he may have received in the art of painting must have been completed. No contemporary records of any apprenticeship survive, but Houbraken states that Backhuysen studied first with Allart van Everdingen (1621–1675) and then with Hendrick Dubbels (1620/1621–1676?).

His late start as a professional painter did not prevent Backhuysen from rapidly gaining widespread fame and patronage. After Willem van de Velde (c. 1611–1693) and his son Willem van de

Velde the Younger (1633–1707) emigrated to England in late 1672 or early 1673, he was unchallenged as the leading seascape painter of the Netherlands. Even as early as 1665 it was to him that the burgomasters of Amsterdam turned when commissioning a large view of the city's harbor to send as a gift to Hughes de Lionne, Marquis de Berny, a minister of Louis XIV of France. For this painting the artist was paid the sizable sum of 1,275 florins.

Backhuysen's clientele is reported to have included a number of other European rulers—among them Peter the Great of Russia, the king of Prussia, the elector of Saxony, and the grand duke of Tuscany—and his works continued to be extremely popular with leading collectors throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. After about 1850, however, his reputation began to wane, and only recently has he once more come to be considered a leading master of Dutch marine painting.

Backhuysen's canvases are often large and frequently depict stormy scenes. His lighting and color schemes are typically more dramatic than those of his contemporary, Willem van de Velde the Younger, although some of their works of the 1670s are rather similar and have on occasion been confused. It is not clear if one artist influenced the other at this time, or if their stylistic convergence was coincidental. A painter upon whom Backhuysen certainly did exert an influence was Abraham Storck (1644–after 1704).

He also had a number of pupils, including Hendrick and Jan Claesz. Rietschoof, Michiel Maddersteg, Jan Dubbels, Pieter Coopse, and Anthonie Rutgers.

In addition to the seascapes for which he is famous, Backhuysen painted some portraits, allegorical compositions, and townscapes. Besides his work as a calligrapher, he was also a printmaker. He was married four times, and died after a long illness in Amsterdam, where he was buried in the Westerkerk on 17 November 1708.

Bibliography

Houbraken 1753, 2: 236–244.
Smith 1829–1842, 6 (1835): 401–458, 561–568; 9 (1842): 777–785.
HdG 1907–1927, 7 (1923): 211–322.
Bol 1973: 301–307.
Preston 1974: 3–6.
Nannen 1985.
Amsterdam 1985.
Minneapolis 1990: 82–97, 402–403.
Brown/MacLaren 1992: 5–6.

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Ships in Distress off a Rocky Coast

1667
Oil on canvas, 114.3 x 167.3 (45 x 65 7/8)
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Inscriptions

On rock at lower center: *LBackh/1667*

Technical Notes: The painting has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. No reduction of the picture plane has occurred. A cream-colored ground, which covers the fine-weight, plain-woven support, is visible through the thinly applied paint. Thin, fluid, opaque paint layers are blended wet into wet with minimally impasted highlights and finely drawn paint lines in the rigging. The paint condition is excellent, with losses confined to the paint edges and only minor abrasion. Discolored varnish and retouchings were removed when the painting was restored in 1985.

Provenance: Arthur George, 3rd Earl of Onslow [1777–1870], West Clandon Place, Surrey.¹ (Sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 22 July 1893, no. 24); J. W. Vokins. Del Monte, Brussels.² (P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London, in 1959); (sale, Christie's, London, 19 April 1985, no. 111).

Exhibited: *Tentoonstelling van Schilderijen*, Kunstzaal Kleykamp, The Hague, 1932, no. 41. Minneapolis 1990, no. 4.

BUFFETED BY VIOLENT WINDS and raging seas, three Dutch cargo ships struggle desperately to stay clear of a rocky coast. The threat of destruction is

real, for the remnants of a shipwreck are ominously present in the foreground: a mast from the doomed ship, its Dutch flag still aloft, and cargo floating in the waves. An even more imminent danger for two of these ships is the threat of collision. One ship, its reefed sails filled with wind, races past two rock outcrops and bears down on another cargo ship that has turned into the wind to try to ride out the storm. Anxious sailors, struggling to bring their vessel under control, gesture wildly as spray from a huge wave crashes against its side. The other vessel's rear mast has broken, and the crew has cut down the top portion of its mainmast to prevent further damage. Most of its crew is on deck frantically trying to control the disengaged mast and sail.³ The outcome of the drama is not known, but Backhuysen creates the impression that man will prevail in this battle against the forces of nature: although massive steel gray clouds loom overhead, clear skies and a golden light in the upper left signal that the storm is about to pass.⁴

Backhuysen painted this dramatic scene in 1667, fairly early in his long and successful career as an artist. Most of his paintings from the 1660s depict identifiable ships massed in the waters offshore, whether outside the port of Amsterdam or near the island Texel north of the Zuider Zee. While Backhuysen delighted in activating such scenes with billowing clouds, choppy seas, and strong accents of light and dark, nothing anticipates the concentrated drama of this work. Indeed, it is remarkable that this painting, which is both large in scale and assured in concept and execution, is the first known representation of a tempest in his oeuvre.⁵

Houbraken states that Backhuysen began his career as an artist by drawing boats.⁶ While the careful, descriptive style of a number of his early drawings and pen paintings suggests that at the outset he was extremely influenced by the preeminent marine painters of the day, Willem van de Velde the Elder and his son Willem van de Velde the Younger, the influences that Houbraken mentions are Backhuysen's first teacher, Allaert van Everdingen, and the marine painter Hendrick Dubbels. Indeed, Everdingen's seascapes, with their convincing representations of turbulent seas and rugged terrains, include rocks not unlike those in Backhuysen's painting (fig. 1).⁷ In the end though, Backhuysen's fascination with the effects of weather in a seascape undoubtedly stemmed from an inherent interest in the sea. According to Houbraken, "nature" was Backhuysen's true teacher. He often sailed to the mouth of the sea to observe changes of light and water along the shore; such excursions provided a vivid impres-